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## THE AMERICAN ROLAND FOR THE BRITISH OLIVER.

A PARTY of English ladies, as is well known, having sent a remonstrance to the ladies of America on the condition of the slaves of that country, and particularly with regard to the denial of education and the occasional severance of the holiest ties of relationship, a party of American ladies, or some one speaking for them, has sent in return, but without expressed reference to the above document, a similar remonstrance on the abject and benighted state of large portions of the working-classes of England. It is as much as to say: 'You are as bad yourselves,' which every one admits to be a bad style of defence; but, what is worse than this, it is not an effective attack on the social evils of England. The writer has not understood them. England, with its usual heroic candour, could make a far better attack on itself.

The vulnerable point for the Americans to have assailed, is the *quasi* slavery of large portions of our populace. It might have been pointed out that, while every one is master of his own actions here, and no class is inferior to another in the eye of the law, many, from one cause and another, are virtually slaves or worse. It might have been shewn that to many it would be a positive promotion, in comfort and morality, to be taken into the care and under the rule of a master having the obligations of a slave-owner towards them. After all this was done, however, a reply would have been ready—that the evils in question are all of them casual and remediable, the effect of transient conditions of society, or of ignorant legislation, and that the people are at this time in the way of advancing out of them, and must in good time throw them wholly into the rear.

When we speak of slavery, or *quasi* slavery in England, we allude to the stipendiary condition in which about one-tenth of the people used contentedly to live, giving up their household rights and independent course of action, in order to be supported in idleness by rates contributed by the remainder of the community. It was believed that so many helpless people there must always be, and it was felt that they must be supported. And such was the condition of the industrious classes generally, that the tone of literature, of society, and of legislation, has for years been a kind of harping upon one string—the duty of the rich towards the poor, the thousands of things to be done for them, the care to be taken of them in all imaginable ways. It seemed as if the upper and middle classes felt themselves under a sacred obligation to relieve their humbler neighbours of almost every duty they owed towards themselves. We see the feeling taking outward expression, not merely

in such broad facts as the raising of six millions per annum of poor-rates, and the existence of 491 charitable institutions in London, spending each year L.1,765,000, but in the numberless efforts by association to provide for the working-classes dwellings, washing-houses, baths, reading-rooms, lectures, and schools. Not a country family but has one or two ladies keeping schools, or distributing tracts and flannels, getting up coal-societies, and manifesting interest in a thousand ways for poor neighbours, who seem remarkably indifferent all the time to the evils of their own state. We have even seen in Edinburgh, rival establishments offering shelter to the houseless; and at this time sectarian differences cause a similar competition between two classes of Ragged Schools. One could almost suppose, that the comfortable had discovered it as a new source of amusement for their leisure hours, and the occupation of the idle members of their families, to get hold of a lot of poor people and pet them. It was done, however, under a motive which, on the whole, was honourable to the upper and middle classes—namely, a desire to raise their less fortunate brethren out of the abject state in which they lived. They felt it was impossible for them to enjoy their own blessings in any peace, while intemperance raved and misery groaned beside their very gates. One can imagine, on the other hand, how some of the more acute among the humbler classes would have their own sly reflections about all this officious charity. How some of a political turn would be saying: 'Yes, anything but a vote;' while others might think, 'All this is but the unavoidable compensation you must give us for enhancing the price of our bread;' others, again, muttering that, with absolute freedom to their industry, they would need nothing from any man but his good-will. Certainly, the symptoms of gratitude from the benefited classes have not been violent; and all who have had anything to do with the associations for enlightening the minds and improving the habits of the operatives, must have felt what an unwilling soil they were working upon.

The mischief was traceable to a variety of immediate causes, all of which could easily be resolved into the defective intelligence and morality of the great bulk of the people. There is a condition of society, primitive and simple, such as existed among the rustics of Scotland eighty years ago, which a rigid morality has little to complain of. The people are few, and much under each other's observation; masters, little raised above their servants, exercise a wholesome influence over them: added to all which, temptations are not many. A formal or dogmatic religion pervades a society like this; and if it does not do much to elevate or warm, it exercises a certain degree of control. But when

manufactures bring great clusters of working-people together, and wealth raises masters above their workers, these old institutions, domestic and public, lose their hold and their power; and no adequate substitute being provided, the masses are left to temptations which they cannot resist. Thus it happens that, while a country may be, on the whole, advancing in civilisation, as is the case of England, a considerable portion of the community may be found rather further back than the corresponding class three generations ago. They make more money, but they use it worse; and while a clergyman with eighty pounds a year lives in a tolerable house, and clothes his wife and children neatly—there are examples—the equal-stipended artisan will be found in a vile garret or cellar, with his family in rags. A fatal spell is on a vast proportion of the class, leading them to spend as they gain, and to spend on the most debasing indulgences, heedless of all that makes life beautiful and dignified—content with no resource for evil days but that public charity which reduces them practically to slavery. Now, the grand difference between the poor clergyman or small shopkeeper, who lives decently, and the workman of equal income, who lives in vileness and on the borders of misery, is just in their education. The one has been trained to a love of cleanly and elegant things, and the other not. The one has been taught to find his pleasures in innocent and improving things, the other in the opposite. In the one, self-respect has been cultivated; in the other, it has never been developed. It must, at the same time, be admitted, that the upper classes are in no small degree to blame for the results, for by their prejudices they have prevented an expanded education, suitable to the new circumstances, from being realised; their legislation, sometimes glaringly selfish, often ignorant, has not been favourable to the humbler classes; and it might even be said that, in their very benevolences, they have done not a little to foster in those classes the abject principles which give them the virtual position and the vices of slaves.

We make these confessions to our American brethren with very little regret; partly because they are true—and we hold it well that the truth should not be concealed—and partly because we have the consolation of thinking, that the *quasi* slavery of England is a doomed thing. The increase of the national intelligence on all points of social philosophy has been very marked during the last few years, and the right kind of public measures are now beginning to be adopted. It is already very manifest, that the doing of simple justice to the people in allowing them untaxed food, and taking away all restrictions on their industry, is much better for all parties, than to grind their faces with one hand and hold out salves and gruels with the other. Instruction, under all difficulties, is spreading abroad amongst them. Intemperance manifestly does not increase: there is great reason to believe that it declines. There are a few things which the industrious masses must soon thoroughly see and understand; after which, their rapid improvement is certain. One is, that money is always a form of power, and poverty a cause of subjection. Another is, that to become possessed of money is not beyond the scope of a working-man's fortune. They have hitherto been accustomed to think of money as an exclusive attribute of the other classes, and as a thing which they have nothing to do with. But they must in time discover their mistake. The great bulk of the money of the country comes, not to the masters, but the men; and for one hundred pounds which the middle classes could save, the working-classes could save a thousand, if they chose. Had they for forty years past hoarded in proportion to their masters, the wealth of England would have been by this time something stupendous. Mr Porter calculated the annual expenditure of the whole people, 'chiefly of the working-classes,' on vicious indulgences, at fifty-seven millions

annually. What a vast amount of power have they thus been recklessly dissipating! It may be asked, what could they have done with their saved money? The question is partly answered, and well answered, by what many who did save have done with the results. They have become masters and capitalists. If, as is expected, we shall soon have a limitation of responsibility in partnerships, there will be nothing to prevent workmen from investing savings in the factories where they work, and in mercantile concerns; they will rise in physical comforts, the honest pride of possession will be fostered in them, and they will be totally different beings from what they used to be. The great change to be expected, is to a system under which a spirit of independence will take possession of the industrious orders. They will despise that patronising language which is now so often employed towards them—not ill meant, perhaps, but undoubtedly disgusting. They will refuse to be held as in pupilage under any other class. They will not submit, as they do now, to have it assumed that they are liable to be coddled, cajoled, proselytised, and rebuked by every person who may choose, from whatever motive, to go amongst them. All this, we must see, is in accordance with the grand decree of Providence—that men must help themselves, and work out their own good. Until it is done, there can be no manner of doubt—and the Americans may make the most of the admission—that there is no small amount of slavery in England.

#### AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE.

NEVER had the ancient and quiet village of Westford been so flustered, mystified, and altogether put out within the memory of the oldest inhabitant—and folk, as the grave-stones testify, live to a great age there—as during the spring of last year. From time immemorial, everybody had known everybody in Westford—their pedigree, birth, parentage, education, past, present, and probable fortunes and condition; and now a family whom nobody knew, had ever heard of, or could obtain any information about, had settled down in the heart of the place, under venerable Dr Irwin's very nose, as it were, for Laurel Villa was but a stone's throw from the vicarage. The house had been taken by a London solicitor, well known to its proprietor, dead old Mr Digby, who had not very distinctly heard, or at all events did not clearly recollect even the name of his new tenants—a widow lady and her daughter, it was supposed. His attention was no doubt engrossed at the moment by the six months' rent paid down in advance—for Laurel Villa had been empty for a long time. Digby, however, had a dim notion that the name had an outlandish sound with it; and this was more than likely, inasmuch as the two servants, a man and wife, were strange olive-coloured creatures, hardly capable of speaking a word of honest English. This circumstance it was, I believe, which caused one of ours—a serious young gentleman, melancholy, gentlemanlike, and pale as a turnip from overstudy of philosophy, it was said—Sawkins by name, and of perfect respectability—to hint in his dark, oracular way, that the strangers were possibly Jesuits in disguise—a suggestion which sent a thrill through Westford, that is, the spinster and wedded portion of it; for the bachelors of the place, among whom I still unhappily count myself, stoutly affirmed, after but one or two brief glimpses of the younger lady, that she was far more like an angel than one of the dreadful people alluded to by Sawkins. The discovery of how charming a youthful face and figure had dropped suddenly among us—out of the skies, as it were—added of course greatly to the excitement, and in the eyes of numerous dames and damsels, invested the event with a highly dangerous character, as affecting the peace of Westford. They foreboded rightly, as we shall presently see, though it

did not at first strike me that the lady's beauty was of that perfect and dazzling kind which such mischievous Helens are usually supposed to possess: certainly, as was soon too manifest, one of the most lovable faces ever seen, taken altogether. One might call it a sunny face, gaily lit up and tinted as it was by the dancing light of the soft brown eyes; but I doubt whether the complexion, clear and exquisitely fair as it was, would be pronounced decidedly brilliant; or whether the nose—a rather small, but charming one, nevertheless, ever so slightly turned up, *retroussé*, as the French say—was of orthodox mould or symmetry. The mouth, to be sure, was unexceptionable, if a rosebud fresh with dew and fragrant with perfume be unexceptionable; and the hair, of the colour of the eyes, was glossy, soft, and untangling. Her figure— But I had better not proceed further: I will only say, that one of our damsels, who stands five feet ten inches in her satin slippers, pronounced her decidedly short; and another, whose favourite apophthegm is, that very precious things are wrapped in very small parcels, as confidently declared her to be far too tall.

This is the best sketch, poor and imperfect as it is, which I can give of the youthful, elegantly-attired, and graceful lady who, on the first Sunday morning after her arrival in Westford, walked up the aisle of the parish church just as the service was about to commence, and asked the gray-haired sexton to place her in a seat. He was about to do so, when the stranger said softly, and with some hesitation: 'Lady Greville and family are not, I believe, at home, and you will perhaps allow me to sit in their pew?'

Now, this was altogether an astounding proposition. The seat in question was emphatically the pew of the church—an enclosure sacred for centuries to the use of the great patrician family of the neighbourhood, the Grevilles, who were and are baronets, lords of the manor, and of thousands of fertile acres. Lady Greville, a very stately personage, and her two daughters, were indeed absent on the continent, and not expected to return for some weeks; and her son, Sir Henry Greville, when he attended church, always, in the absence of his own relatives, sat with the family of his intimate friend, Arthur Raymond, the only son of a retired merchant-prince, who, a few years before, had purchased a large estate in the neighbourhood, and was now second only to the Grevilles in local rank and importance. The pew was consequently unoccupied; but one of the aborigines of Westford would as soon have dreamed of mounting the pulpit, and asking permission to preach in the place of the Rev. Dr Irwin, as of entering it. The surprise of the sexton was, it may be supposed, extreme. He hesitated, and repeated what the stranger had said, as if in doubt that he could have heard aright. The request was again made, and with so charming, so graceful a tone and manner, that the ancient servitor, before he had time to comprehend perfectly what he was about, unlocked the seat-door, and, to the indescribable astonishment of the congregation, admitted the audacious intruder! This was not all—very far, indeed, from being all! The Misses Dorothea and Jane Austin, who sat in an adjoining pew, and who had unquestionably the sharpest eyes and longest necks in Westford, saw the stranger, after hastily drawing a curtain, which, however, but partially concealed her from the two ladies I have named, stoop down towards a lidded oak receptacle containing the Greville books of devotion, as if she had been familiar with it all her life, seize upon an old family Bible, undo its silver clasps, turn at once to the fly-leaf, where, as it seemed, she hastily perused some lines in a female hand, whilst tears, unmistakable tears, filled her eyes! What on earth could be the meaning of it? asked all Westford, especially when, on coming out of church, they positively beheld the strange lady drive off to Laurel Villa in Sir Henry's carriage, placed at her service by that gentleman in consequence of a heavy

shower of rain which had suddenly come on, and from which the umbrella, brought by the olive-faced servant, would hardly have effectually shielded her. The perfect ease, too, with which the offer was accepted, and the gracious smile that she bestowed upon the handsome young baronet, who, with his friend, Arthur Raymond, remained behind in the damp church-porch till the carriage should return! 'Did you ever?' asked matrons and maidens of each other in blank wonderment; but nobody ever did, and that was all that could be said on the matter.

On the following evening, the Misses Austin, Miss Rawson—all three spinsters of an uncertain age—and Miss Mary Foster, a slim young lady in short curls and very low tucker, contracted, it was said, to Mr Richard Austin, the brother of the first-named ladies, were seated at tea—self-invited, by the way—with the vicar's lady. The truth was, it had become known that the Rev. Dr Irwin was paying a visit to Laurel Villa—a very lengthened one—and the company assembled were waiting with almost desperate impatience for his return.

'Quite a foreign name,' remarked Miss Rawson: 'Mal something; but I could not quite hear what the dark-looking servant said.'

'Mal!' said Miss Dorothea Austin—'Mal! that is French—one of the words of the motto on the Queen's—h-e-e-m!' This pause of the fair Dorothea was occasioned by the sudden entrance of Mr Sawkins.

'The Queen's garter!' suggested the young lady in curls. The other ladies, with the exception of Mrs Irwin, seemed quite scared, and looked steadily out of the window at the vicar's carved yew-trees. 'Bold thing!' they appeared to be thinking; 'but then what can be expected after a year in a London boarding-school!'

'I think,' said Mr Sawkins, resuming the conversation which he had partially overheard—'I think the name of the strangers is Malleville: at least it is so given by the servants.'

'That is simply a mispronunciation of the English name of Melville. A Mrs Melville it is who has taken Laurel Villa,' observed the vicar's lady.

'Melville!'

'Yes. I was just thinking,' continued Mrs Irwin, as she poured out the tea, 'that this is not the first time a strange mystery, or interest rather, has attached to Laurel Villa. You, my dear Dorothea, no doubt remember that about five-and-twenty years ago—'

If Miss Dorothea's violent start at this shocking insinuation escaped Mrs Irwin's lips, had caused her to let fall the cup she held in her hand, instead of only spilling a portion of its contents on the carpet, the merry twinkle in the venerable lady's bright gray eyes would have been properly punished, for it belonged to her best Dresden set. The eloquent blood flamed in Dorothea's cheeks, and her voice quavered with indignation as she burst out with: 'I remember nothing about Laurel Villa, and desire to remember nothing about it or its inmates!'

'Well, well, don't be angry. I remember,' continued Mrs Irwin, with an accent of sadness—'I remember well Major Conway, who once dwelt there, and his marriage with Rosamond Tarleton, Lady Greville's sister.'

'They went abroad soon afterwards, did they not?' asked Miss Rawson.

'Yes. Lady Greville was bitterly opposed to the connection, and would never afterwards hold any communication with her sister, by letter or otherwise. Yet her death, about four years ago, greatly affected her; and she would give much, the vicar thinks, to recall the past.'

'Is Major Conway yet living?'

'I do not know. Nothing, I believe, has been heard of him at Greville House since his lady's death.'

The entrance of the vicar—a silver-haired, but still bluff, hearty gentleman—interrupted the conversation.



The expression of sober gladness, so to speak, which beamed in his eyes, caused Mrs Irwin to say quickly in an under-tone: 'It is as I supposed?'

'Yes. Mr Sawkins,' added the vicar, as he seated himself at the tea-table, 'can you tell me if the intention of Arthur Raymond and Sir Henry Greville still holds as to their continental trip?'

'Up till yesterday morning it certainly did; but I heard a hint dropped about an hour since, that the impatience of one if not of both the gentlemen to be gone has suddenly cooled.'

'Ah! I hoped so!' The reverend doctor looked pleased, and instantly and pertinaciously turned the conversation to other subjects. Vainly did his visitors strive to extract something relative to the tantalising mystery over the way: the vicar was inflexible; and they at length gave over the effort in despair, took grimly-ferocious leave, and departed homewards.

The information imparted by the reverend gentleman to Mrs Irwin, as soon as they were alone, was in substance as follows: The young lady, as they had surmised, was Gertrude Conway, the only surviving child of Major and Rosamond Conway. Mrs Melville was a widowed sister of the major, who had died about two years before in the south of France, where he had long resided. Mrs Melville's income—not a large one—would die with her; and as her health also was declining, she had determined upon making one more attempt at placing Gertrude under Lady Greville's protection. She had a fixed idea, that the only mode likely to effect this object was to introduce her suddenly, and without notice, into the presence of her stately aunt, when her great resemblance to her mother would, Mrs Melville trusted, soften the obdurate lady's heart in her favour. Mrs Melville also believed, that if warned of what was intended, Lady Greville would peremptorily refuse to see her; and moreover, could not be reasoned out of her belief, that Sir Henry Greville must have been prejudiced by his mother against the Conway family. Her plan then was—and the vicar, though somewhat contrary to his own judgment, for he hated plots and concealments, yielded his assent, and promised his assistance—that, during the five or six weeks still expected to elapse before Lady Greville's return, the cousins, Gertrude and Sir Henry, should be permitted, encouraged rather, in habits of friendly intimacy, by meeting occasionally at the vicarage, Mrs Melville shrewdly concluding that Gertrude's remarkable style of beauty, and the grace and elegance of her manners, would at least make such an impression upon her cousin as to insure her his powerful intercession when the decisive moment should arrive. In the meantime, she would be known as Gertrude Melville only. The vicar promised inviolable secrecy; and the very next evening contrived a meeting with the young people at his house. After this, there were few evenings that Sir Henry and his inseparable friend and companion, Arthur Raymond—whose family, by the way, were also absent from their seat near Westford—did not pass in the reverend doctor's drawing-room. It soon, consequently, became a settled conviction in every person's mind, that Dr and Mrs Irwin were bent on helping the young and obscure stranger to perhaps the best match, both as regarded wealth and birth, to be found in the county.

If this were so, the worthy gentleman must have been a good deal startled by a brief scene which occurred one evening a day or so only before Lady Greville was expected home. When the vicar entered the drawing-room, the young lady was seated at the pianoforte, trying over a number of songs, at the suggestion of Sir Henry, who turned the leaves assiduously. The aspect of the two—the admiration visible upon the gentleman's countenance, and the bright joyousness of the lady's features—was satisfactory enough, until a sound, faint as a sigh, sad as a groan, caught her ear

—her ear, not Sir Henry's—when the tone of the rich, silver voice faltered, and the time of the song was increased to a gallop. The baronet made no remark, but continued to turn the music-leaves as delightfully as before. The vicar had looked in the direction of the singer's momentary furtive glance, but would scarcely have recognised Arthur Raymond, in the obscure corner where he sat, but for his dark flashing eyes. Dr Irwin was about to speak, when Gertrude suddenly rose from the piano, complained of headache, and asked Mrs Irwin to accompany her over to Laurel Villa, and stay supper there. This request, at a sign from the vicar, was immediately complied with, and in a few moments they were gone.

Sir Henry continued to turn over the songs that had been sung, humming as he did so a few favourite bars now and then; and Arthur Raymond remained in the same motionless attitude, and with the same fierce expression flashing from his singularly expressive eyes. The worthy doctor was at a loss what to do or say. He felt a presentiment that something was wrong; that an unfortunate, perhaps perilous game of cross-purposes was in progress; and how had it happened, was his painful self-question, that this palpable danger had never before struck him? The two friends, though both of about the same age—in their twenty-sixth year—of similar tastes and pursuits in many respects, were the very opposites of each other in temperament and original cast of mind. Sir Henry, always perfectly master of himself, calm, reflective, unimpassioned, lively and gallant in female society, greatly resembled his lady-mother in decision and firmness of disposition. Arthur Raymond, on the contrary, was of an impulsive, enthusiastic temperament, and impressionable in a high degree.

'Come, Raymond,' said Sir Henry, suddenly breaking in upon the vicar's reverie, 'it is time we were off.' His friend rose, and after exchanging brief adieus with the agitated doctor, they left the house. The reverend gentleman, after a few minutes' cogitation, took up his hat with the intention of following them, though with scarcely any defined purpose in doing so; but by the time he reached the outer gate, they were already out of sight; and he, sadly perturbed and apprehensive, walked slowly over to Laurel Villa.

I do not remember if I have before remarked, that Westford is a beautifully situated village; but if not, in now stating that it lies contiguous to an abbey at present in ruins, but rich and flourishing in the olden time, the reader will at once understand that it was exquisitely so. The good monks were gifted with unerring instinct for searching out pleasant pastures by abounding rivers, and sunny-sheltered aspects. It was along such a river, winding in the moonlight like a silver ribbon through copse and meadow, that, after exchanging one or two sharp, strange sentences, the young men strode quickly in the direction of the abbey ruins.

These sentences were overheard by Richard Austin, whose name has been mentioned before. He was a person of some property, the only encumbrance on which were his two sisters, who lived with him. Austin was a sort of country buck, one of the vainest coxcombs alive, and mischievous and spiteful as a monkey. People said he was contracted to Mary Foster; but if this were so, the charms of Gertrude Melville had rendered him, temporarily at least, unfaithful; and he had made shy, blundering, awkward advances towards that lady, so contemptuously repulsed as to excite in him the deadliest animosity and spite. The words he had overheard, and the excited demeanour of Arthur Raymond, determined him to follow and watch what might be the upshot.

He had walked about half a mile, when he observed them turn, and he presently perceived that they were walking arm-in-arm, and that it was probable, there-

fore, that the cause of disagreement had passed away. Austin, however, walked on, shielded from their observation by intervening copsewood. Just as he drew near, they stood still, as if about to separate, and Austin came stealthily within earshot.

Something was said by Sir Henry Greville about the beauty of the night, and then the full, manly, but now somewhat tremulous tones of Arthur Raymond, were heard.

'You have made me strangely happy, Greville; and yet may not you be deceived?'

'My life upon it, no! I am a keen student of the hidden meanings of women.'

'I was so differently impressed: and so wonderful too,' continued Raymond, in a half-abstracted manner, as if recalling some fresh, delightful dream, and uttering it aloud—'so wonderful that you should have been so often in Gertrude Melville's society, and felt towards her merely as a brother—as an affectionate relative.'

'Nothing more, I assure you; besides, from some half-words dropped by the good vicar's lady, I had early reason to believe that — But we will speak further on the matter hereafter. It is getting late; and it is quite possible Lady Greville and my sisters have arrived—if so, will you look in and dine with us to-morrow?'

'I hardly know how I can, for my father has brought down with him half a regiment of male friends. But shall we have a run with the hounds in the morning?'

'I cannot promise, as I have some business to arrange to-morrow; but I will send you an early note; and if not, I daresay I shall be able to spare time to come over and breakfast with you. If I do, I shall bring Collier with me: he will be glad to see your father.'

'Do. Good-by!' and the friends parted.

All this was poison to the skulking, envious man who overheard it. A cruel, dastardly thought shot through his mind and gleamed across his sallow face. 'I think I could,' he muttered, 'let down the strings that make this music, as the man says in the play. Sir Henry is, I am sure, mistaken in the lady's sentiments; but he, it is plain, would not marry her. Now, if she could be made to believe that the young baronet had sent a proposal for her hand, the secret of her preference would be betrayed, herself exposed to the bitterest mortification, and all chance of her entering the wealthy family of the Raymonds destroyed. By Jove! I see how it could be easily managed, for his writing I can imitate to a nicety.' Thus musing, the miscreant slowly wended his way homewards; and it was late that night before his self-imposed task was completed to his satisfaction—assisted, as it has always been said he was, by his sisters; but this, I hope, for the honour of womanhood, is an error, though in Westford a prevalent one.

The next morning, Richard Austin was early at Greville House. The porter who admitted him was desired to ask if Sir Henry hunted that day, and he left the hall for that purpose. The moment his back was turned, Austin placed a letter quickly in the wired box on the table, in which there were already several others. He had scarcely done so when the servant, whose duty it was to take the letters to their several addresses entered the hall, placed them in his leather-bag, and forthwith departed. Sir Henry's answer, that he did not hunt that day, quickly followed; and Austin, in high glee, rode off.

Arthur Raymond had been still earlier abroad; he had not, indeed, slept at all during the night. Not yet could he yield to sleep—oblivion—a moment of the new and rapturous life beating at his heart! But he could not remain in even bodily repose. In the abbey woods he could run, leap, shout—give physical play to the joyous tumult in his throbbing veins. And when had morn risen radiant and glorious as now, even upon Westford, so calmly, beautifully bright? When before had the air been so exhilarating, the flowers exhaled such perfume, the birds warbled such music? When had the

silver river so leaped and sparkled to meet the golden kisses of the sun? Never, in his remembrance—never! It was a changed world! Thus raved the fond madman, still, as he did so, drawing nearer and nearer to the magnet which compelled his steps. The inmates of Laurel Villa were, he well knew, early risers. He should perhaps obtain a glimpse of Gertrude in the front flower-garden, screened from the public path by flower-bushes and a light iron fence. He was right. Although it was scarcely eight o'clock, she was there watering some plants. The lady must have read aright the expression of his excited features, for her eyes fell timidly before his, and the fair cheek glowed with a deeper crimson than before, whilst the smile about the charming mouth, as she invited him to walk in, had, he thought, a character of archness about it never previously observed.

He would walk in; but the liveried letter-carrier from Greville House was coming towards them: he, Arthur Raymond, expected a note from Sir Henry, and the man had doubtless recognised him. The messenger quickly approached, drew up at the gate, placed in Arthur Raymond's hand two letters, and then rode over to the vicarage. Has a serpent stung Arthur Raymond, that he starts so wildly? 'For you—for you,' he gasped, 'and from Sir Henry Greville!'

The lady, divining with woman's quickness the cause of his agitation, said instantly: 'A letter for me, from your friend Sir Henry! Pray open it, then, and read me its purport; for my hands, you see, are full.' Arthur Raymond did not require to be twice told. He tore off the envelope, and, confusedly running over the contents, shrieked out the following fragments of sentences: 'Beloved Gertrude—the rapturous conviction that—that mutual sympathy—Raymond's scarcely concealed advances—compel me to hesitate no longer'— 'Ah God!'

The suddenness of the blow paralysed the unhappy young man, and he sank down as if smitten with sudden death. Terribly alarmed, the lady called loudly for assistance, which soon arrived in the shape of the two foreign servants. Leaving him to their care, she seized the astounding letter, and hastened to seek Mrs Melville; but before they could return to where Gertrude had left Arthur Raymond, he had not only been restored to consciousness, but had burst away with a wild passionate cry from his attendants, and at so fierce a speed that he was already out of sight.

Dr Irwin was immediately sent for; and on being shewn the letter, he instantly pronounced it—from internal evidence of the style, matter, mode of expression, admirably as the handwriting had been imitated—to be a malicious forgery. The result of the conference was, that the reverend gentleman's four-wheeled chaise was got ready with all possible dispatch, and the two ladies with himself set off at once for Greville House, where, as the vicar heard, Lady Greville and family had arrived late the previous evening. It was felt to be of the last importance to prevent a meeting of the young men whilst one of them laboured under so exasperating a delusion.

Whilst this was passing, Arthur Raymond was down upon his face in the dark wood. He had just strength to reach it, to feel that he was alone, concealed from all the world, and the next moment fell prone on the dank grass, totally insensible. How long he thus remained, he knew not. The cold dew helped at length to revive him; and as the agonising memory of what had occurred came darkly back, a fierce, unreasoning aspiration for immediate vengeance usurped and dominated every function of his mind. An unopened letter was by his side. It was torn open, and read eagerly: 'My mother and sisters arrived late last evening, and Collier and I intend taking an early gallop by Somerton, reaching Marston Hall, through the abbey wood, in time for breakfast.' One loud, vengeful shout burst

from the maniac, and he went off at headlong speed towards home.

He was not long in reaching Marston Hall, in hurriedly acquainting Lieutenant Barlow—a young dashing officer of dragoons, who had arrived the day before on a visit—with the deceit and insulting treachery of Sir Henry Greville; and then, provided with a case of duelling pistols, powder, ball, and so on, they both left the house, and hastened towards the abbey wood. Lieutenant Barlow, so incoherent and wild were Arthur Raymond's words, could only understand that his companion had been grossly and insultingly betrayed by the person they were going to meet; and he was beginning to think whether it might not be as well to have a clearer, more distinct idea of the cause of quarrel, before he irretrievably engaged himself in it, when Sir Henry Greville and Major Collier, an old Indian veteran, came in view, leisurely cantering along. A yell of passion burst from Arthur Raymond, and he was springing madly forward, but was forcibly restrained by Lieutenant Barlow. 'Stay here, my dear fellow; I must first speak to these gentlemen.'

The two horsemen reined quickly up as they came near enough to read the expression of the lieutenant's face. 'What is the matter?' asked Sir Henry.

'You had better dismount, sir. We must speak together: here, throw the bridle over this branch. Your services also, major, will, I fear, be required.'

'Arthur,' exclaimed Sir Henry quickly, as the infuriated young man, unable to restrain himself, came fiercely up—'what is the meaning of this?'

'Damnable, treacherous scoundrel!' broke in Raymond.

'Ha!'

'You had no thought, not you, of Gertrude Melville—villain! traitor!'

'I neither had nor have,' rejoined Sir Henry, who plainly perceived that some terrible misapprehension existed.

'Liar, too, as well as villain!' shouted Raymond, beside himself with rage. 'A coward too, perhaps. Well, then, take that!' and he struck the baronet a violent blow on the face.

Sir Henry appeared about to return it, when Major Collier arrested his arm: 'A blow, Sir Henry, cannot be avenged in that way. Barlow, since this must be, give me the pistols, and do you measure the distance—twelve steps, and place your man: we stand here.'

Little further was said: the pistols were loaded, the ground paced off, and the young men placed opposite each other.

'Hark!' said Lieutenant Barlow; 'there is a sound of carriage-wheels approaching.'

'No, no, no!' cried Raymond, with frantic vehemence, observing the seconds hesitate. 'One of you give the word as agreed; and quick.'

The sound had ceased. Either their ears had deceived them, or the grass deadened the noise of the wheels.

'I will give the word,' said the veteran. 'Greville,' he added, in a low tone to his friend, 'do not throw away a chance; your antagonist, I see, means mischief. Now then,' he continued, 'ready—present—fire!'

The reports of the pistols were simultaneous; and now, plainly enough mingling with the ringing echo of the explosion, was heard the gallop of horses, and the sound of wheels, intermingled with the screams of women. In another moment, Lady Greville's carriage, in which were her ladyship, Mrs Melville, Gertrude Conway, and the reverend vicar, came in sight. The smoke had whirled off, and both the combatants were standing. Arthur Raymond had dropped his pistol on the ground, once convulsively tossed his arms in the air, and was now gazing, as if fascinated, in the direction of the open carriage, which rapidly approached. For a few moments only did he so gaze; the, for a time,

will-constrained muscles, suddenly relaxed, and he fell to the ground, to all appearance wounded to death.

It did not, happily, prove so; though the passage of the rash young man through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, was long and painful. The bullet, which had lodged in the right side, was extracted without difficulty; but brain fever subsequently came on, and nothing, it was all along plain, but a remarkably vigorous constitution, could have brought him through.

There are a few brief points to notice, and one act of scanty justice to record, and I have done. Lady Greville had received her niece with the greatest cordiality; and Mrs Melville was fain to admit, that her cautious plotting and contriving had been productive only of confusion, sorrow, and danger. Just as frankly and heartily did Arthur Raymond confess the rash violence of which he had been guilty towards his old friend and companion; the injustice of his doubts of Gertrude's preference, which the cooler and more clear-headed Sir Henry had assured him of—a preference confirmed and sealed beyond question on New-Year's Day last past, at one of the most magnificent weddings our county has ever witnessed; the lady being given away by the baronet, and her cousins, the Misses Greville, assisting as bridesmaids. It really seemed that his long illness must have improved the bridegroom's health, for assuredly Arthur Raymond never, everybody said, looked half so handsome and happy before. As to the bride's appearance—But there—it's of no use trying.

Richard Austin's authorship of the forged letter was fully established, partly in consequence of flurried words that had fallen from Miss Dorothea at the time of the supposed fatal termination of the duel. No legal punishment could, however, it appeared, be inflicted; and except one of the soundest horse-whippings administered by Sir Henry which ever man had, and a capital ducking in the horse-pond by one of the most unanimous of small mobs I have ever seen, the fellow skulked out of Westford scot-free, and was soon afterwards followed by his sisters. The young lady with the brief curls did not share his fortunes. She remains with us; and it is but common justice to say, is greatly improved in all respects—partly owing to the quiet steady examples by which, since her return from London, she has been surrounded, and partly, no doubt, to a thumping legacy devised to her some seven or eight months ago by an octogenarian aunt. So entirely am I, for one, convinced of this, that—that—But no; I merely took up my pen to relate what I knew concerning 'An Offer of Marriage;' and that which Mary Foster must have received full a quarter of an hour ago, is undoubtedly a genuine one.

#### THE QUEEN'S MONEY-MAKERS.

FAMILIAR as we all are, or wish to be, with money, it is noteworthy how little is generally known concerning the manufacture of it—the actual processes whereby a nugget, or an ingot, or a bar, is converted into coin; and very little more is known concerning the persons by whom the manufacture is carried on. Who makes the money? Is it the Sovereign, or the House of Commons, or the Bank of England, or the Mint? If the latter, what relation is borne between it and the other three powers? As certain important organic changes have lately been made at the Mint, this will be a convenient time for giving a general sketch of Mint operations, and their relation to the crown on the one hand, and the public on the other.

In the early Saxon and Norman times, there were several mints in various parts of the country; each king, prelate, or noble stamping his name on the coins minted by him, in token of his individual responsibility for its genuineness. At the close of the twelfth century, many of these royal mints were consolidated, and a warden of the mints appointed; further consolidations



afterwards took place; and at length, in 1279, there was permitted one Royal Mint only, of which the warden was individually responsible to the sovereign for all the coin made. The bullion-dealer who sent gold or silver to be coined, was to pay the warden a fee for mintage expenses, and a seignorage or royalty to the sovereign. After this, the officers of the Mint became a corporation, with very extensive powers. About the time of Elizabeth, in the attempt to retrieve the extreme debasement of the coinage by Henry VIII., the crown resumed into its own hands the mint contract, and farmed its own mint; but it soon reverted to the old system.

As to the coins issued, Henry VII. was the king who originated our present coinage or currency, having in 1489 first ordered the striking of a new piece, double the value of a ryal or ryal-noble, and to be called a *sovereign*, current for twenty shillings; in 1504, followed the striking of shillings and half-shillings, in addition to the previously-current groats and half-groats. He was the first, also, to cause an inscription to be made round the circumference of the coin, to lessen the nefarious practice of clipping. The coin, when made, was always put into a strong box, *pyx* or *pix*, before being delivered, or at least that portion of it which was destined to undergo the scrutiny called the 'trial of the pix.' In early times, the *pix* had two keys; but a third was afterwards added, that there might be as complete a check as possible on the officers concerned. The debasement of coin mentioned in the last paragraph was one among many immoral acts which stain the name of Henry VIII. He cheated his subjects by making bad coin, and compelling them to take it as if it were good. This went on by degrees, until at length the silver coin contained only one-fourth pure silver to three-fourths copper. Mary partly restored the former honesty of the coinage, and Elizabeth completed it. Mary made standard silver and gold similar in this respect, that each consisted of eleven parts pure metal to one of alloy—an arrangement attended by two advantages; one was, that the poundweight of standard silver was divided into sixty shillings, so that every crown-piece was exactly an ounce in weight, and every coin an aliquot part of an ounce or lb.; the other was, that the poundweight of gold was coined into 36 sovereigns, so that three sovereigns weighed exactly an ounce. There has never, since Mary's reign, been so convenient a ratio between coins and weights; the whole of our present coins bear very clumsy numerical relations to our weights, whether troy or avoirdupois, as the following will sufficiently illustrate:—Sovereign, 5 dwt.  $3\frac{1}{2}$  gr.; crown, 18 dwt.  $4\frac{1}{2}$  gr.; shilling, 3 dwt.  $15\frac{1}{2}$  gr.; sixpence, 1 dwt.  $19\frac{1}{2}$  gr. Even this is only an approximation: the exact weights would give still more minute fractions.

Down to the time of Charles II., a piece of coin was always worth more *as coin*, than if melted down as bullion. This was done, not necessarily from a dishonest motive, but to remove all pecuniary grounds for melting down the coinage; a man would not melt down his crown-piece, because the resulting silver would not then be worth quite five shillings. Charles II., however, in order to bring into his own exchequer a larger coinage-duty, made the value of coin equal to that of bullion; the consequence was, that money-jobbers, on every rise in the market-price of the precious metals, melted down the coin into bullion, which was, under those circumstances, of more value. There were thus constant meltings and recoining, attended with loss in many ways to the general community. At the present time, gold coins, weight for weight, are worth as much as bullion; but silver coins are worth a little less than standard silver in bars or ingots: thus the shilling is intrinsically worth only about  $11\frac{1}{4}$ d.

By degrees, the Mint became established as an office of the crown, in order that no coin should be issued

without government sanction. For a long period, down to the present century, the coining was conducted in the Tower; but the present Mint was finished in 1811, at an expense of a quarter of a million sterling; and here the coining has been since conducted.

The ground-plan of the Mint shews, more clearly than a brief glance at the building itself, how extensive were the arrangements involved. The ground-floor contained residences for the following officials:—clerk of the irons, master's first-clerk, melter, and refiner, deputy-comptroller and Queen's clerk of copper coinage, chief-medalist, chief-engraver, Queen's assay-master, deputy-master, Queen's clerk and clerk of the papers, assistant-clerk, moneyers, provost of the moneyers, master's assay-master, bullion-porter, surveyor of the money-presses, office-keeper, surveyor of the melting, resident carpenter, foreman of the gas-works, engineer, mechanic, millwright, foreman of die-sinking shop, head-foreman of Queen's assay. Then the working-rooms, as we may term them, comprised engine-houses and boiler-houses, several strongholds, cutting-out room, milling-room, annealing-room, grinding-room, gold-melting house, silver-melting house, refiners-room, die-forge, refinery, melting furnaces, copper foundry, adjusting-roller room, lathe-room, copper store-room, shaking-room, picking and blanching room, coining-press room, moneyers-hall, laboratory, assay-offices, *pix*-office, copper refinery, copper-melting furnaces, &c. Several of these rooms were of considerable size—thus, the silver-melting house is 50 feet by 34, the coining-press room is 72 feet by 25, the annealing-room is 48 feet by 34, the copper refinery is 50 feet by 26; and the copper foundry 50 feet by 40.

The above-named officers and rooms apply to the Mint in the state in which its operations were carried on until very recently; but changes have occurred, and are occurring. In 1848, the government appointed a commission to inquire into the whole conduct and arrangements of the Mint. Before noticing the reforms suggested, it may be well to describe the organisation of the establishment.

The Mint may be considered in its three departments—the governmental, the operative, and the check.

The governmental department comprised the master, the deputy-master, and a Board, consisting of some of the other officers. The master, until the recent appointment of Sir John Herschel, was usually a politician put in by a friendly government: he drew the salary, but did very little work for it. The deputy-master was the effective head of the establishment. The Board was a kind of bench of magistrates, controlling minor matters within the sphere of the little republic at the Mint.

The operative department comprised all the officers engaged in superintending or executing the actual coining processes. Among them were the master's assayer, the melter and refiner, the company of moneyers, the chief-engraver, the superintendent of machinery. Formerly, the master, who was also called *worker* of the Mint, had been partly paid by a percentage on the bullion coined; but this was commuted for a fixed salary. The master's assayer determined the fineness and value of the bullion brought to the Mint, and directed the proper mixture or alloy to form the standard gold and silver. The melter and refiner brought this standard metal into the proper form of bars for the coiners. The moneyers executed all the work of converting the bullion into coin. The chief-engraver designed and executed the dies requisite for the impression of the various coins. The superintendent of machinery had the general charge of the machines, dies, and other apparatus.

The check department comprised a few officers, whose duties were to check the operations of the others. They consisted of the comptroller, the Queen's assay-master, the Queen's clerk, the surveyor of the meltings, the surveyor of the money-presses, and the clerk of the irons. The comptroller had a general power of supervision, but

with very little power of enforcing any protest which he might make. The Queen's assay-master had chemically to examine the metal, both during and after the coining processes; and he possessed full power to order the remelting of any which might not be of the right standard. The Queen's clerk was a sort of sub-controller. The surveyor of the meltings attended the operations of the melter, and exercised some kind of control over his proceedings. The surveyor of the money-presses filled an analogous office in relation to the moneyers. The clerk of the irons had the especial care of the dies, and checked any surreptitious or irregular use of them.

There is here, certainly, a formidable array of officials; enough, one would think, to do the work well, and to check each other's proceedings—unless, indeed, Tom should have been doing nothing, and Jack helping Tom. The extreme importance of keeping the coinage correct and honest seems to have led to the retention of many old usages, for fear of change or its possible consequences.

Nothing can be more anomalous than the mode, or rather modes, in which the Mint officers were paid for their services. The master was paid a salary, instead of receiving part salary and part percentage, as in former times. The master's assayer was paid partly by salary and partly by fees. The melter and refiner made a written agreement with the master, defining the rate at which he should do his work; retaining the privilege, at the same time, of refining and melting on his own personal account, with the Mint machinery and the Mint workmen; and so snug an office had this become, that the melter and refiner has the same terms now (or had in 1851) as he had in 1815, although the cost of the processes has diminished 30 per cent. out of doors.

But it is in respect to the company of moneyers that the arrangements are the most absurd and provoking—absurd in themselves, and provoking in the extent to which the public were made to overpay for services rendered. The moneyers comprised a provost, four members, and two apprentices or probationers. Their office was an exceedingly remarkable one, differing in character from all others in the kingdom. It was not that of officers acting wholly in the interest of the crown, neither were they ordinary mercantile contractors; they held a kind of intermediate place, being *officially* intrusted with their operations, and *commercially* paid for executing them. The moneyers were not appointed by any public authority, but formed a body continued by self-election, assuming to possess legal corporate rights, and claiming the exclusive privilege of executing that part of the coinage-work belonging to them. These operations, they alleged, could not be transferred to other hands without a violation of their rights. Curiously enough, while they thus claimed the sole right of doing the work, they depended upon three months' agreement as to the rate or terms at which they would do it. But notwithstanding various mechanical and other improvements which facilitated their labours, they received nearly the same prices as they had done eighty years ago. There was also a Treasury order, more than a century old, which gave them an extra allowance of L.40 each in any year when the coin made might not have amounted to L.500,000, in order that 'they may not be too far exposed to temptation by their necessities.' Poor fellows! their necessities must have been wondrously great. The moneyers took apprentices for seven years, with a fee of L.1000 for each; and from these apprentices they elected new members into their body as the old ones died off. When the commissioners made their inquiry, they found the moneyers very tough antagonists. They (the moneyers) claimed privileged and exclusive rights, and they possessed both freehold and personal property as a corporation; yet the cash-book, which professed to contain an account of the receipts and disbursements of the company, they

would not and did not shew. And when the commissioners asked each one individually, what was the amount of his official receipts from the Mint, the whole were suddenly struck with a most astonishing and unanimous loss of memory; no moneyer could tell how much he received, or how much any of the others received; no moneyer kept a private account. This phenomenon of official loss of memory, or loss of official memory, does occasionally present itself, as all newspaper readers are aware. It was by other evidence the commissioners found that the net profits of the refiner and melter, from 1837 to 1847, amounted to nearly L.40,000; and that the net profits of the moneyers, for the same years, amounted to L.127,000. In the six years, 1842-47, they actually received L.17,500 per annum, on an average, net. Three out of these poverty-stricken individuals have official residences in the Mint.

Towards the close of 1850, the Treasury applied to the master of the Mint (the late Mr Sheil), to obtain his opinion respecting the changes in the Mint proposed by the commissioners. He recommended that the moneyers' contract should wholly cease, and that the coining should be let to eminent firms by public tender; that the assayer, if a salaried officer, should not also assay on his own account; that the melter and refiner should, in like manner, be debarred from mixing up the two kinds of business in this singular manner; and that analogous changes should be made in the offices of the engraver and medalist; in short, that the Mint operations should be so conducted as to open the door for talent in other quarters. Within a few weeks afterwards, Mr Sheil accepted another government appointment, and Sir J. F. W. Herschel became master of the Mint. The Treasury asked Sir John's opinion on the whole matter, and he recommended a gradual adoption of Mr Sheil's suggestions. Early in 1851, the government assented to the changes; and nearly the whole of that year was taken up in negotiations with the assayers, moneyers, melters, refiners, engravers, and others, who did not forget to ask largely when compensation was talked about. Some of their demands were quite outrageous; and Sir John Herschel had no little difficulty in acting between them on the one hand, and the Treasury on the other; but all the obstacles were removed one by one, and the new order of things was entered upon. In the first instance, coiners will be employed by the master, until experience shall shew how best to enter into contracts with eminent firms out of doors. Sir John began this system in August 1851; and by January 1852, he had coined eight million pieces, without the aid of the old moneyers' corporation.

One of the changes involved the abandonment of the refinery within the Mint; the refining being hereafter to be done by contract, out of the building. Sir Anthony Rothschild has leased the refinery for ten years, at a rent of L.500 per annum; the building is to be severed from the other Mint buildings, and the lessee is bound to refine gold and silver for the government at so much per pound; the government being at liberty to employ other refiners also, and the lessee to refine for other persons also, at pleasure.

All our above details, therefore, in respect to the Mint, its officers, and its operations, must be taken as applicable to a state of things which is now receiving much modification. Still, the building itself remains, and most of the coining processes will continue to be conducted within its walls, under the control of a master whose high scientific character seems eminently to fit him for such an office.

The actual relation existing between the Mint, the Bank of England, and the public, is somewhat as follows:—the Mint is bound to receive and convert into coin, at the public expense, all gold bullion, nearly of standard fineness, which may be brought to the building



for this purpose. Any one may thus bring bullion; but, practically, the Bank of England is nearly the only employer of the Mint for gold coinage—owing to the delay which takes place in the conversion into coin, and the regulations under which the Bank purchases gold bullion. In respect to silver, the case is different. The Mint officers purchase from time to time such quantities of silver bullion, and of worn silver coins, as may be necessary to maintain the silver currency of the country in a proper state. The same is the case in respect to copper. In this operation, the loss from the abrasion of the coins, and the cost of recoinage, are charged as part of the expenses of the Mint, which are provided for by an annual vote in the House of Commons. The gold coins are sent back to the Bank, in exchange for the gold bullion; but the silver and copper ones are issued to the public in exchange for gold or notes. For new gold coins, therefore, we must go to the Bank; for new silver and copper coins, we may apply to the Mint. The Mint is also required, on demand from the Treasury, to supply such descriptions and quantities of coins as may be necessary for the service of the military—chests of the different colonies; the coins for the colonies being often very different from those for home use. The Mint is also to provide such honorary medals as the government may require.

This subject of the medals leads us to notice the delicate and important office of making the dies. The coin-dies and the medal-dies have been hitherto made by two parties; but on the death or retirement of Mr Pistrucci, the two offices will be consolidated.

The late Mr Wyon attained a high reputation as engraver to the Mint; but no skill can produce a good die, unless the steel be prepared with extraordinary care. The steel is well selected in the first place; it is forged roughly to the shape of the die; it is heated, and cooled again slowly, to soften it; it is turned, and shaped, and smoothed, to the exact size and shape required; it is engraved with the required device; it is heated and cooled quickly, to harden it; it is further hardened and strengthened by other processes; and it is finally cleaned and polished. But a yet more remarkable process is to follow. This die would stamp the coin well; but so great has been the expenditure of time and labour in producing it, that it becomes desirable to shield it from casualties. It is therefore employed as a *matrix*, instead of a *die*; that is, it is employed to produce other dies, instead of serving as a die itself—or rather, it produces a *punch*, which punch produces dies. A block of soft steel is very carefully prepared, and is pressed into or upon the matrix with immense force, being annealed and pressed, annealed and pressed, over and over again, until the soft steel has taken an exact, but of course reverse, impression of the hard steel. How watchful must be the care in this difficult and delicate process may be conceived. The punch thus made, when hardened, is used to procure any number of dies, by a similar pressure against softened pieces of steel.

The office of Mr Wyon, who died in October 1851, was to engrave the matrixes for the coins; and he has been succeeded by his son. The engraving of the dies or matrixes for medals is chiefly the work, as we have stated, of Mr Pistrucci, who is called the medalist to the Royal Mint. The engraving is wrought out by small hardened steel tools, and is an extremely slow and precarious process: one flaw, or one slight error, may destroy the product of long-continued labour. Under the ordinary circumstances of coining, a die gives away, or becomes deteriorated, after striking 30,000 or 40,000 coins; but as a hundred punches or more could be made from one matrix, and an equal number of dies from one punch, the engraving of one matrix would suffice for an immense amount of mintage. Every punch is, however, touched up by the engraver, to give it sharpness, so that the services of a Wyon or a

Pistrucci are in frequent requisition. The engraver of such dies is essentially an artist in the highest sense of the term; and commissioners wished to view the office in that light, in the various recommendations which are now being carried into practice.

Reverting to the Bank, we must observe that the Bank authorities frequently melt gold coin into bars. They make up the coin into parcels of £70,000 worth, and divide this into 100 bags. A clerk and a porter take them to a melter's in the city, and wait while the gold is melted, each bagful being formed into one bar. The melters charge 3d. per lb. for the melting. The bars are taken back to the Bank, and a small piece cut off each; this piece is sent to the Mint, to be assayed by the assay-master. The gold coins may have been from different countries, and of different standards, and it is necessary to have the metal assayed to determine its quality. It will then, in all probability, be sent to the Mint to be coined; but the Mint will not coin bullion which deviates much from the standard—the trouble to bring it to the standard being in such case too great.

It is satisfactory to find that great public advantage seems likely to result from the reform in the Mint. Sir John Herschel, in a report to the Treasury a few months ago, said: 'The working of the new establishment fully justifies the recommendations of the Mint Commissioners and Mr Sheil. Not only is the expense diminished by the extraordinary profits of the moneyers and melter, but the expense of the fixed establishment is also reduced, and the whole department simplified and brought under the direction of one executive head. The annual saving, with an average amount of coinage, calculated from previous years, may fairly be estimated at £11,000; subject for a time to the deduction of the compensation allowances payable to persons removed or injured by the changes.' If the influx of Californian and Australian gold should lead to more coinage, the saving is estimated at £3,000 on every additional million.

These details concerning the general management and organisation of the Mint, will prepare us to understand the actual operation of coining—one of the most curious of our metallic manufactures.

#### A LITERARY OFFENDER.

THE crusade of professional critics against a certain book, neither very important in itself, nor professing to be so, is a highly curious and suggestive circumstance. The book in question is not ignored with editorial contempt, or even classed humanely among the heap of insignificants. It is dragged forward among the more considerable works, and assailed with a violence that might be ascribed rather to personal than literary feeling; yet the book presents itself modestly, as merely a handful of addenda to a former work; and its author is not only a woman, but an earl's daughter to boot. Why is this? It is by no means an important book, as we have said; but it exhibits good sense upon most common topics, and good feeling on all: it is distinguished by shrewd observation, some originality of thought, and a generous, womanly spirit. What can there be in its pages to rouse the indignation of the masculines? Thereby hangs a tale.

We live in fast days, when railways laugh at the old ten-mile-an-hour gallop, and when literature, in like manner, looks back with contempt upon such slow coaches in style as Addison and Goldsmith. Criticism itself is fast, and applauds the high-pressure speed of contemporary authors; but poor Lady Emmeline Wortley applauds more than all, and rushes, with the enthusiasm of her character, into so outrageous an imitation, as to

scandalise the whole fashionable press. Among the peculiarities of that style—which is of recent origin—is a strange fancy for treating all sorts of subjects in a jocular and in some degree unintelligible fashion—a proceeding, to say the least of it, beneath the dignity of literature, and anything but respectful to that not inconsiderable part of the world who desire at least common-sense for their money. Now, just at the moment when people are beginning to sicken of these interminable doses of misplaced fun, out comes our titled authoress with a whole bucketful of it—double distilled.\* Her book, therefore, is, in many passages, a practical burlesque upon the faith of her censors; they are terrified at her profanity; they tremble for their own infallibility, and would 'beat the rogue for making them afraid.' If the reader will turn to our author's diatribe against wall-papers, he will see at once that she differs from the modern fast school only in outstripping it a little. Imagining that the reader goes to bed in a chamber so decorated, she proceeds: 'Before you actually dropped off to sleep, you were cherishing—unwittingly taking the hint of the stale, unprofitable, heterogeneous hieroglyphics on the walls—all sorts of zig-zagging hopes and Vandyked anticipations, and dwelling on a host of lozenge-shaped memories; or perhaps those reminiscences might seem artfully cut into innumerable small octagon forms; and you were indulging in countless crinkum-crankum, cork-screwing, curled-up little fantasies, all fitting into one another, like the pieces of a child's map; and complacently pondering over divers scalloped and sprigged, and skewered sentimentalities; and forming little running resolutions of the exact fiddle-faddling pattern before mentioned, frittering away into all kinds of odds and ends, and crotchets and quavers; and entertaining sharp-elbowed, triangular ambitions, remarkably clear and well defined; and so, instead of fair visions of this beautiful world, hill and dale, or sea or forest, you are haunted in your first dozy, dreamy hours of sleep by the most unmeaning of sippets, and scallops, and swallow-tails, and sprigs, and sprays, and shoots, and specks, and stripes, and sprouts, and shreds, and snip-snaps, adorned with borders primi as those of an old maid's night-cap, and flourishes that look like pig-tails galvanised, and jags, and tags, and flim-flams, and semiquavers standing on their heads, and bodkins on three legs, and demented-looking clothes-pegs, and broken-backed toothpicks, and nondescripts of all shapes and no shapes. I have seen some of these precious imaginative papers, apparently producing a most abundant crop of cocked-hats and tweezers alternately—the cocked-hats somewhat collapsed—and agreeably diversified by something bearing a strong resemblance to a deformed tadpole on tiptoes. Of course, this improving and interesting design was repeated over and over again—myriads of collapsed cocked-hats alternated with countless hosts of uncompromising, rigid-looking tweezers, and innumerable armies of humpbacked tadpoles; in another room overwhelming multitudes of boot-jacks, literally placed on tenter-hooks, nevertheless seemed dodging round and round the room, thousands of families of unpleasant-looking pill-boxes—at least, such appearances they dimly bore; while, instinctively, my bothered brain laboured hard to attach

some purport to the bewildering, cabalistic signs of those most mystical of mystics—paper-stainers.'

Is not this deliciously overdone? Or take an Arab lady dancing:—'One woman, who was said to be a Bedouin Arab, and who was thickly tattooed, so that she was a mass of stars, figures, arrows, suns, moons, and all kinds of ingenious devices, danced most indefatigably; but such extraordinary dancing! Now she figured about clumsily like a peewit with the gout, now like a hippopotamus prancing on hot irons (she was remarkable for *embonpoint*), and now she looked like an elderly porpoise dancing on the tight-rope.' Another sketch of *embonpoint* is more refined in its absurdity, for we cannot say more subdued:—'I saw one enormously fat woman while at Tunis (not the one of many-chin notoriety); she was dressed of course in the Moorish fashion, her upper garments being loose and light, of a pale-pink colour. She seemed like a constellation of feather-beds, and gave one the idea of being lost in her own immensity; and when she spoke, her choked, suffocated voice seemed to come from the centre of the earth almost; her eyes appeared buried in vast protuberances of plumpness; and she must have had incessantly a fine prospect of gently-undulating hills of cheeks before her. Methought she could see a great deal of her vasty face without the help and instrumentality of any looking-glass—a pleasant privilege would this be to many, peradventure.'

In a description of the delights of travelling by a public vehicle, her ladyship gets again into her altitudes. 'You will undergo,' she says, 'almost as many transformations as the lover of a certain wicked enchantress in the *Arabian Nights*. Now you will appear changed into a remarkably flat flounder, now into a twisting eel, and now into a nondescript thing, with the head growing under the arm, and the limbs in general, nowhere in particular—a terrific bang and crash takes place; again another—a double-barrelled bang that, for your rumbling vehicle, on a rather abrupt descent, has shot in and out of two small neighbouring caves or pits (apparently on an impromptu mining expedition), performing a sort of diving on dry land, which is more wonderful than pleasing; and you felt as though you were shut up suddenly like a telescope, by a terrible rap on the head, proceeding from you know not what: but yet it may be anything, from the heels of one of the mules, whose traces may have given way, and itself, poor thing! sent plunging out of a hole half into the now dipping and now rising window; or it might be the off-wheel (doubly off, then), driven by dexterous chance right through the side of the coach; or the coach-box detached, and hurled through the roof; or a too close *tête-à-tête* with your opposite neighbour; a very detestable one—not the poor neighbour, who is as much to be pitied as you, but the *tête-à-tête*—if it was one. Your costume is transmogrified too. Look at that gentleman, whose waistcoat-pockets are turned into stocks, not for the neck, but the feet, which members of his companion are there fixed, to their joint discomfort. In the meantime, now acting the part of a balloon, and now of a diving-bell, the unfortunate big coach proceeds pleasantly, soaring, sinking, jolting, bolting, jarring, tumbling, thundering, staggering, wrestling, shooting, diving, dipping, plunging, bumping, thumping, quaking, quivering, struggling, straining, spinning, pitching, rolling, bounding, rocking, twirling, heaving, throbbing, awaying, creaking, groaning, leaping, flying, shivering, shuddering, splitting, crackling, hopping, jumping, starting, tottering, reeling, stumbling, tossing, jostling, scrambling, jerking, clattering, and rattling, sometimes separately. Sometimes apparently all together, putting the "water" that "comes down" at Lahore to utter shame.'

Here, it will be seen, Lady Emmeline's imagination has once more run away with her; her vaulting ambition

\* &c. By the Lady Emmeline Stuart Wortley. London: Bosworth. 1853.

has overleaped itself, and fallen on the other side; and her imitation of the new school almost deserves the name of originality. We must say, however, that we blame the mannerism in question only as a school—as something affecting, or designed to affect, the whole surface of literature, and in a certain degree influencing the turn of thought. We may be amused with the very extravagance of the style in its originators; for in them it comes naturally; they do not strive after it with the painful efforts obvious in the above passages—it runs away with them, and we look on at their gambols with a sympathising feeling. But the spread of this extravagance over a wide area of literature is somewhat portentous, and we therefore look upon the appearance of *fic* at the crisis to which we have arrived, and the consequent alarm and indignation of the critics, as important facts. Indeed, we cannot conceal that we have now some hope of the whole affair blowing gradually over. A similar crisis occurred, our readers may remember, after the publication of the *Sentimental Journey*. Nothing was seen or heard of for a time but sentimental journeys, tales, essays, histories, sermons; till at length the public turned away from the dose with sickness and disgust; and when we look back at the period now, not one of the imitations is visible—*the Sentimental Journey* itself standing proudly and alone, a landmark in the literature of the country.

The mischief that may accrue from this senseless spirit of imitation, is very visible in the volume before us; which shews distinctly, that if the author would only trust to her own genius, she is very capable of commanding attention and respect. For proof of this, we refer our readers to the book itself, which they will observe, even from the burlesque extracts we have given, is amusing. Let us just mention, however, that little anecdote of our author's visit to Tunis, when a resident English family were alarmed by the visit of a wild cat—a more terrifying apparition there than a hyena or even a lioness. When the uninvited guest was dislodged, a brave little boy, ashamed of the terror he had exhibited, 'thought it incumbent on him to enter into a slight explanation of his conduct and feelings. This very engaging little gentleman was about five years old, and as, besides his prettily imperfect pronunciation of his mother-tongue, he had the habit of constantly translating literally from the Arabic (in which he chattered away most fluently), his discourse was often exceedingly amusing and original; on this occasion, he began by suddenly exclaiming with considerable emphasis: "Me wish it had been lion; if it had been lion, me would have broken him. Me like lions, tigers, and big hyenas (with great dignity and earnestness). Tigers, lions, and hyenas very good, but—but—me afraid from saints and cats!"

'The conjunction seemed a singular one rather, but the saints thus alluded to were the fascinating marabouts before mentioned; and impressively he repeated, as the image of the yelling fury of the previous day rose to his fancy, accompanied by that night's terrible visitor: "Yes, me very afraid from saints and cats!"

'It was pretty, by the way, to hear those charming children jabbering away the rich Arabic to one another, and to their old Jewish nurse, Marsala; and interesting to observe how they translated Arabic idioms and expressions into English. Their mother told me she heard one of the little ones contradicting the other one day with the most pompous and stately Arabic gravity and solemnity, thus: "By the beard of my father—no!" "In the name of the Prophet, why not?"

The connection established by Lady Emmeline between Ireland and Tunis is very curious. 'One afternoon, at Tunis, as we were walking in the warm sunshine before the house, I heard a woman, as I thought, in an unmistakable Irish accent, calling to her little boy: "Daly—Daly!" Hearing this, and on

looking at them, I remarked to my amiable hostess, that I could have easily taken this little Moor and his mother for two southern Hibernians had they been a little less dark. In reply, she assured me she had often been greatly struck herself with the resemblance of the names, the countenances, many of the habits and customs, and the manners of these people to those of the southern Irish. If the latter are descended, as some think, from the Phenicians (and there was a colony of them at Tunis), the only extraordinary feature of this similarity is, the fact of its surviving through so many centuries, so many vicissitudes, such differences of climate, religion, government, and country. A very common name here, my friend informed me, is "Killaney," which has certainly a thoroughly Irish sound. She also told me, that very frequently the same extraordinary resemblance in their hovels has attracted her observation in her visits to the poor in the vicinity. She declared that sometimes she could positively fancy herself in Green Erin; and she had been a good deal in Ireland, I believe, in her life.'

We cannot refrain from a glimpse of American steam-life. 'All the largest class of steamers are capable of running twenty-two miles in the hour, and they average twenty miles with ease. You may thus, if you choose, be conveyed in a perfect palace of the waters, environed with all imaginable comforts, luxuries, and conveniences, on the bosom of the beautiful Hudson, with a succession of enchanting views to delight and interest, and without the slightest trouble on your part, at the average rate of twenty and twenty-two miles an hour, for actually a less sum than one-sixth of a penny per mile. Does not this seem a tolerably moderate charge? So sensible are the Americans of the advantages possessed by these superb steamers, that in the summer, frequently individuals establish themselves on board for a lengthened period, as they would do at hotels on *terra firma*, preferring those locomotive lodgings, with all the agreeable additional variety of view, generally equally pleasant society, and perpetual change of air, to the stationary places of temporary abode on the banks of the noble stream: so for awhile they become in a way "Ancient Mariners" of the Hudson, perpetually tracking and retracing its liquid thoroughfare. For board, lodging, very good attendance, and being transported about 150 miles, at upwards of twenty miles an hour, their total daily expense is 10s. 10d. The state-cabin in which they sleep is fitted up as beautifully as the most richly-furnished apartment in one of their own superb hotels, and is far superior to any room of the kind in the very largest class of packet-ships. . . . It is not at all uncommon for happy couples to spend the honeymoon on board these splendid boats; and there are in many of them most superb bridal apartments, decorated in the most lavish and costly style of *recherche* magnificence. There was on board the *Boston* a luxuriously-furnished apartment of this description. Those who saw it said it was a complete mass of elaborate gilding and painting, and of satin, velvet, ribbons, and lace in a thousand festoons and fringes, and loops and tassels. It seemed a perfect fairy bower of art: the force of upholstery and haberdashery could no further go. An amiable and recently-united couple came on board at one of the large towns, in all the gaiety of their bridal array, accompanied by a large train of friends and acquaintances, who, before taking leave of the "happy pair," went to inspect the fairy, palace-like suite of rooms that was destined for them. The newly-married couple honeymooned on to New Orleans; of course, except as far as regarded a few incurious persons, "the observed of all observers." This, however, seemed far from displeasing to the parties most implicated; so all on board the fair steamer alluded to, pretty literally "went merry as a marriage-bell."

The hotels are as wonderful as the steamers. '... If



they go on spreading at the rate they have lately done, the traveller will find himself shewn into a complete covered New York, or an entire roofed-and-glazed Philadelphia, and will require a topographical map to direct his wandering footsteps. The following is the prospectus of a new hotel that is intended to be erected at a favourite watering-place: the Crystal Palace must keep a bright look-out, or it will be quite beaten. "This new hotel is to be of the most colossal dimensions" (in 1864, I make no doubt, it will appear a rather small country inn), "and will be the wonder and admiration of the age" (of the quarter of a year, read instead). "It is to be 500 feet on Circular Street, 2500 feet on Putnam Street, with a broad piazza 4000 feet long in the inside, extending the whole length of all the buildings. The front part of the hotel will be conducted in the ordinary mode, where the charges will range from two to five dollars per week. The north wing will be appropriated to those who wish to occupy rooms and board themselves; and the west wing will constitute a large and commodious 'water-cure' establishment. The whole establishment will accommodate about 2500 persons: it will be a hotel, in fact, for the million. The estimated cost of grounds and buildings is 530,000 dollars: cost of furniture, 220,000 dollars. It is to be lighted with gas, furnished by the projector himself. The Bachdyt Farm, of 200 acres, which is only two miles distant, is to be connected with the establishment, where the inmates can, if they wish, be employed in the exercise of farming and gardening" (this will save them doctors' bills, no doubt); "and thus they may pay a portion, or the whole of their expenses, as well as improve their health."

This is the manner in which our observant and intelligent author invites her countrymen to see and judge of America for themselves, and with this we must conclude; expressing, in parting, a hope that at some future time we may meet the same writer arrayed in her own good sense, and minus the efforts at nonsense we have pointed out, which are the only ridiculous things in her present production:—"How I wish that every one in my own dear country, who still entertains any lingering and unworthy prejudices or dislikes against our enterprising transatlantic relations, would put him or herself into one of the magnificent Cunarders or Collinses, and come over the "big ferry," to judge for themselves on the spot; taking especial care to leave behind them, with any other inconvenient lumber and heavy baggage, those same useless encumbrances of prejudices, antiquated jealousies, and unfounded dislikes—let them come and see with their own eyes (without the help or hinderance of anybody else's green, or blue, or jaundice-yellow spectacles) our noble-hearted, wonder-working cousins, in their own gigantic and glorious country. They may, perchance, hear themselves called "strangers," when addressed by some son of green Columbia; but those who so call them would, in all probability, treat them as hospitably as though they were friends of long standing, and would take, if any opportunity presented itself, more care of the stranger's life than they would of their own—though, sooth to say, that is not saying a very great deal after all, for a people more careless of existence, and more half-fellow-well-met with grim death, it is not easy to conceive. I fully believe my traveller, if he will but take the preliminary precautions I have insisted upon, and leave at home his routine old opinions, and mistaken, second-hand, bolstered-up, ignorant, antediluvian antipathies and ideas, will be delighted, as I am, with American society; and he will be rewarded for his exertions, not only by getting rid of that moral jaundice—that dull vulture Prejudice, feeding on the liver of his mind—not only by finding a delightful set of relations new to him (a sort of family reconciliation), but by the additional attractions of a sublime scenery, in many portions a splendid climate, an atmosphere like

that of golden Ausonia; and if he stay during that season of enchantment, the sight of an autumnal display of splendour, surpassing every imagination of glory and magnificence that shines forth in tale of faerie or fytte of poesy."

#### THE GRAPE BLIGHT.

DURING the last few years, the vine mildew has spread devastation over the vineyards of Western Europe. Although the British cultivator is not apt to regard the grape-vine as a crop of national importance, it is otherwise with the agriculturist of the south of continental Europe, where the vineyard takes the place of the corn-field. Originally a native, perhaps, of the north of Africa, the *Vitis vinifera* has been cultivated in Europe from remote antiquity; and at the present time, it is the chief agricultural crop over a large extent of the continent. It has been carried to the New World; and notwithstanding its comparatively recent introduction into the North American states, it is already one of their important agricultural plants, although there are several kinds of native vines which likewise yield fruit. An instance of the extent of cultivation in one locality is given in the American *Gardeners' Chronicle*, from which we learn, that the vineyards around Cincinnati alone cover at least 1200 acres of land, the cultivation of which gives employment to 600 efficient labourers, at an annual cost of 20,000 dollars. These vineyards produce, in moderately favourable seasons, 240,000 gallons of wine. It is stated, that the wine interest in Hamilton County affords subsistence, directly and indirectly, to 10,000 "industrious and sober" people, most of the labourers having families to support.

The new epidemic threatens to be as detrimental to the wine countries as the potato disease has been to Ireland; for whatever its ultimate results may be on agriculture and commerce, its immediate evils have fallen upon those engaged in this department of rural industry: many of the vine-growers have had their crops completely destroyed, and large numbers of the industrial population have in consequence been reduced to misery. Britain, although not a wine country, is a vine-growing country—producing the finest hothouse grapes in the world—and our crops have by no means escaped the blight; happily in most parts of our island, the loss will fall upon those who are able to bear it, and merely deprive our lords and ladies of one of the choicest dishes of fruit which their gardens produce. Our first introduction to the grape mildew took place in the garden of the Horticultural Society of London, in the summer of 1851. In walking through the garden, we were surprised to find that the whole of the grapes out of doors, of which there was an abundant crop, were completely covered with the mildew fungus (*Oidium Tuckeri*, Berk.), which had arrested the growth of the berries, prevented their ripening, and rendered them quite unfit for any purpose whatever; scarcely a sound cluster was to be seen in the garden, except under glass, where the application of powdered sulphur and other expedients (explained to us by Mr Thomson) had been successfully adopted to ward off the malady. This special instance is alluded to as having first come under our own observation, and at a time when little was heard of the ravages of the disease; but it may be regarded as an illustration of the influence of the blight on the grape crops of England generally—for during the last two years, there have been few sound grapes produced in the open air in Britain. In fact, the blight first manifested itself at Margate, in England, and gradually spread into France, appearing at Versailles in 1848, at Paris in 1849, and finally extending to the south of France in 1851; at the same time, it rapidly travelled 'the whole length of Italy, from the coast of Liguria to Naples; then, as autumn approached, taking

a retrograde course through the Tyrol as far as Botzen, overrunning nearly the whole of Switzerland northwards to Winterthur, and at last trespassing on certain isolated points of Germany at the Hardegebirge, in Baden at Salem, and in Württemberg at Stuttgart and Cannstadt.\*

It is a remarkable fact, that the mildew made its first appearance on vines under glass, those in the open air becoming subsequently affected. Mohl observes, that in Switzerland and Württemberg, where grapes are cultivated exclusively in the open air, those vines trained to walls suffered much more than the vineyards in the open field. 'I was convinced,' observes he, 'that in particular spots, where the malady was at present much confined, it had passed from the trellises to the neighbouring vineyards. It reached the greatest height on those trellises which stand under the wide-spreading roofs of the Swiss houses, and by which they are protected from rain.'

In Italy and France, the disease, in its first attacks, is said to have fallen with greatest effect on the finest vines—namely, 'on those that are sheltered, planted in good soil; also, those on trellises placed against houses, in courts and gardens: those, in short, which are in the most vigorous condition, although they may have been well syringed and manured, are the most attacked.' Vines growing freely, and which had been neglected to be pruned, produced bunches of fruit entirely free from blight, despite their close neighbourhood to infected plants. Even the wild vines rambling in the hedges around the blighted vineyards, were free from disease, except in a very few cases in bad soil and unfavourable localities.

The grape mildew is in all cases accompanied by the fungus (*Oidium Tuckeri*, Berk.) to which allusion has already been made. This fungus consists of delicate cobweb-like threads, which spread over the surface of the young shoots, leaves, and fruit of the vine, decomposing its juices, and thus destroying the vitality of the superficial cells of its tissues. Its effect upon the fruit is very remarkable. The filaments of the parasite spread over the whole surface of the fruit, but act detrimentally only upon the skin, with which they are in contact. The soft fleshy interior of the fruit goes on expanding in vigorous growth; but the infected skin loses its vigour, and ceases to expand in proportion, so that the berry becomes ruptured, and either dries up or rots. The fruit is safe if it escapes attack until it has arrived at nearly its full size.

The fruit is not the first part affected. Even when the berries are quite sound, an inspection of the shoots of the vine is sufficient to shew that the disease is at work in the tissues of the plant. Its presence may be ascertained by the appearance on the shoots of dark and reddish specks, formed by a longitudinal series of small dots, which indicates a diseased state of the sap. The affected shoots are also much more brittle than those in health. These marks precede by several days the appearance of the mildew on the fruit; and M. Guerin Meneville observes: 'When I saw, on apparently very healthy and vigorous shoots, a series of dark specks, arranged longitudinally, and following the course of the vessels, I could announce, to the great astonishment of the peasants, that their vines would be mildewed in a few days.' He shews an inclination to adopt the opinion, that the mildew is, in fact, the consequence of a disease in the vine itself, which he likens to inflammation proceeding from an excess of vitality. This view seems to derive encouragement from the fact, that many vine-growers have benefited the health of their vines, or entirely warded off the disease, by pruning them after the swelling of the buds, thus causing them to give off a large quantity

of their sap by 'bleeding.' Root-pruning has produced similar results.

Valuable practical observations on the subject have been published by M. Guerin Meneville in the *Comptes Rendus*—a translation of which has appeared in the *Gardeners' Chronicle*. All the facts which he has observed in the course of his journey in quest of information—in Piedmont, Italy, and the south of France—lead him to think, 'that there is a deeply-seated cause of disease in the disorganisation of the vines, as well as in that of the potato, and in silkworms, in countries where these are extensively reared. This cause appears to consist in a want of equilibrium in the functions—whether it be from an excess of vitality, or too rapid vital movement—or from a deficiency of vitality, atony, excessive weakness. Probably both these causes lead to the same result—a disease terminating in mildew under certain conditions.' Mohl, on the other hand, thinks it 'probable that the fungus first affects the plant on which it grows, by decomposing the juices of the superficial cells, and impeding their growth in the same way in which *Achlya prolifera* injures the aquatic animals on which it grows, and as *Merulius destructor* (dry-rot) produces decay in deadwood. Many experiments also seem to prove, that the cause of the disease is to be found in the fungus, according to which the further diffusion of the evil is greatly repressed by the removal of the first affected shoots on a wall, the destruction of the fungus through washing,' &c.

The malady seems to be more prevalent on some particular varieties of grape than upon others; but information is wanted on this point. Mohl even regards it as an unsolved question, whether this fungus is confined to the vine, as it has been asserted to infect many other plants; but we have the authority of the translator of Mohl's paper (Rev. M. J. Berkeley?), that it at least extends to the Chinese chrysanthemum when grown in a vinery.

It appears that in the Jardin des Planes, the vine mildew has not attacked vine-like plants growing near the common grape-vine in a state of disease; and such facts have led Dr Lindley to recommend the grafting of the fine varieties of grape-vine upon the American vine (*Vitis Labrusca*), as a remedy for the disease. That plant being of very robust habit, and better suited to a cold climate than *Vitis vinifera*, there can be no doubt that the use of it as a stock for grafting would lead to more successful cultivation generally in Britain—for even in the south of England, the climate is too severe for the proper development and complete ripening of the grape-vine in the open air. The suggestion is therefore worthy of trial, independent of its value in respect to the vine mildew.

It has been stated, however, that the fruit of the fox-grape, or common wild grape-vine of the United States, is also attacked by a parasitic mould, which Mr Berkeley supposes may be synonymous with our mildew, although that disease has not manifested itself on American vines in Europe. 'A nearly allied fungus is most destructive in Pennsylvania to gooseberries; inasmuch that in some districts, except in very propitious years, no fruit comes to perfection. The berries, before they arrive at maturity, are completely invested with the sterile flocci; and in consequence, become perfectly dry and juiceless, so as to be quite uneatable. Schweinitz, indeed, informs us, that at Bethlehem he had for many years found scarcely a single berry uninjured.'\*

Is the use of diseased grapes injurious to health? This is an important question. Many statements have appeared in the continental papers of colic and vomiting having been caused by the eating of blighted grapes. Mohl regards them as not injurious. He says, that

\* Hugo v. Mohl in *Journal of the Horticultural Society of London* (translated from the *Botanische Zeitung*).

\* Rev. M. J. Berkeley in *Gardeners' Chronicle*, 1832. No. 14, page 212.

'many express experiments' to that effect have been communicated to him, and that 'the extent to which the malady has lately reached in France, could not fail to have afforded a number of well-established examples, if the diseased grapes were really injurious, for they were frequently eaten by children.' It may be unnecessary to remind the reader, that in the wine countries fresh grapes are eaten extensively by the inhabitants as an article of food.

No efficient remedy applicable to the vineyards has as yet been suggested for this blight; but those whose vines are confined to the hothouse have sufficient and practicable remedies. Dusting with sulphur, fumigation with the smoke of tobacco or tobacco-paper, washing with solutions of lime, sulphuret of lime, alum, soap, and other substances, have all been suggested; and most of them have been attended with good effects, especially, we believe, the dusting with sulphur after the plants are syringed slightly with water.

### E T N A.

WHATEVER may be the comparative claims of Etna and Vesuvius to attention, it seems certain that the latter is the more intimately entwined with our associations, and the more vividly present to our mind. Its nearer position, its oft-repeated delineation by the artist, and, more than all, the classic reputation it has earned by its overthrow of Herculaneum and Pompeii, have each, no doubt, its share in bringing about this result. And when, on actual inspection, we observe the remarkable form of the mountain—its complete isolation, its association with some of the most lovely scenery in Europe, and the manner in which, with the buried cities of old at its feet, it looks, stern and solemn, across the still waters upon the gay and lively Naples of to-day—we find our impressions deepened and heightened as they pass from anticipation to experience. It is, then, somewhat fortunate for its reputation, that, in respect of magnitude, Vesuvius is not compelled, by juxtaposition, to a contrast with the higher Italian mountains—for such a contrast, even in figures, is sufficiently unfavourable: Vesuvius boasts but 3500 feet of altitude, whilst the Gran Sasso, a Calabrian mountain, in fact the loftiest of the Apennines, reckons 9500 feet. Still more fortunate, then, that it is not next-door neighbour to Etna, its rival in fiery power, which attains a threefold elevation, its summit being 10,874 feet above the level of the sea, and crowned with everlasting snows. Indeed, if Vesuvius is to be counted among things sublime, it is certainly somewhat owing to the gathering around of circumstance; whilst Etna finds place in the list by the force of its own independent majesty. When you look around you from the Milan duomo, the mountain masses which close in the Lombardy plain, though many miles away, appear stupendous; and so, when you gaze upon Etna afar off—say from Syracuse—it will seem as though some solitary Alp had been plucked up from more northern regions, and planted here in the south.

Its extent as well as its height is something enormous, and the former of these attributes is well sketched by Gally Knight, in describing his impressions on first seeing it from the sea between Messina and Catania. He says: 'As we advanced, the immensity of Etna was gradually disclosed—the immensity rather than the height, for it spreads over such an extent, that its real altitude is lost in the expanse of its base. It is a country rather than a mountain; rising alone, stretching far and wide, and coming down to the sea; bare and barren above, but green and fertile below, with regions of forests and vineyards, edged, next the sea, with a black and rough trimming of the lava, which successive eruptions have sent down.' Indeed, the idea of Etna's extent is not difficult to seize.

Most of us have formed in our minds a standard of a great and a small in mere surface dimensions. There are few persons of us who have not a considerable respect for a walk of twenty miles, and fewer still who would not desire to be excused one of forty, but the round of Etna's base would be one of ninety! Let us not, however, in estimating the vastness of its area, fail to grasp an adequate idea of the greatness of its elevation. It is true, indeed, that for those who have travelled in mountainous countries, it is quite sufficient to state, that the height is two miles: they single out the recollections of some equally elevated mass, and so form at once a mental picture; but this is not the case with those unfamiliar with such scenes. Two miles measured along the ground is intelligible to every one, but two miles of perpendicular rise is quite another thing. How, then, convey the idea? It may at least be some assistance to state, that from the summit of Etna, with no atmospheric causes to obstruct, the eye enjoys a sweep in every direction of 127 miles; so that, by a mere turn of the head, it is possible to behold two points on the horizon distant one from the other 250 miles! And hence it may be inferred, that if the mountain were at the western instead of the eastern extremity of the island, the coast of Africa itself would become visible, seeing that the distance between its more advanced headland and the wine establishments of Marsala does not exceed 100 miles. To us, it appears that considerations of this nature convey a stronger impression of great altitudes than any bare exhibition of their direct magnitude in yards or feet.

The view from the summit of Etna is admitted by all who have actually witnessed it, to be glorious in the extreme. But it was not our own good-fortune to experience this enjoyment. Attempting the ascent at a too advanced period of the year—namely, towards the latter end of October—we were prevented, by a combination of snow and wind, from getting further than to the foot of the crater, or about 9500 feet above the level of the sea.

Catania, the point from whence the ascent is usually made, is situated in a large bay, at about the middle of the eastern side of triangular Sicily. From hence to the summit, a distance of twenty-four miles has to be passed; and yet, owing to the vastness of the mountain's spread, the city may be said to stand at the commencement of the upward slopes. To see Etna from this place is indeed a grand thing—it looks near and overwhelming. At times, its snow-capped summit will stand out in dazzling whiteness, and sharp outline, upon the blue ground of sky; at other times, it will be altogether shrouded under cloud and mist, so that if brought suddenly, and for the first time to the spot at such a moment, you would be quite in ignorance of the vicinity of the giant.

It is usual to divide Etna into three belts or districts—namely, the cultivated, the woody, and the barren; corresponding respectively to the lowest, middle, and highest portions—an arrangement which serves, indeed, to assist the memory, though it will not thoroughly bear an examination in detail. The upper part of the cultivated region is about 2000 feet above the level of the sea, terminating at Nicolosi, the last inhabited village. And up to this point, it is difficult indeed to realise that you are on the sides of a volcanic mountain. Fruits of varied species are in rich exuberance around you; every ten minutes your mule bears you through a small town or *passeo*, as the Italians call it; and the road is lively with the hum of a busy population. 'We are not to be surprised,' writes Brydone, 'at the obstinate attachment of the people to this mountain, and that all his terrors have not been able to drive them away from him; for though he sometimes chastises, yet, like an indulgent parent, he mingles such blessings with his chastisements, that their affections can never be estranged; for, at the same time that he



threatens with a rod of iron, he pours down upon them all the benefits of an age of gold.'

Beyond Nicolosi, a tedious tract of barren land, in spite of the theoretical division, is passed over, and then comes the woody region—beautiful indeed. At times, you find yourself in the depths of the most romantic valleys, rejoicing in the rich clothing of forest foliage, and every idea of a volcano seems banished from the mind: but no dwelling is here; and with the exception of the busy denizens of the insect world, life is met with only in the herds of cattle, and those few peasants who may be required to tend them. And now the real barren region is entered upon: here there is no dwelling, no foliage, no life—not even insect-life—save only the solitary traveller with his guide and mules. Now, indeed, you *feel* that you are on Etna: you have to pick your way, or rather the mule does so for you, through masses of jagged lava; the cold increases every moment, and if there is wind, becomes next to unbearable; soon patches, then large tracts, and finally an uninterrupted surface of snow is arrived at; and so the explorer is introduced to the foot of the crater, where he may awhile enjoy the repose so much needed in a small stone-house, or rather hut, built many years ago by some English officers, and thence called the Casa Inglese. This Casa Inglese met with in any civilised place, would be considered as nothing more than a wretched hovel, but come upon after such fatigue, at such an elevation, and in such a temperature, verily it is to be counted as nothing less than a palace! There is a striking peculiarity of the mountain encountered in ascending so far, the mention of which must not be omitted. It has, at various epochs, thrown up from many points of its sides baby mountains of considerable absolute, though very small relative size. The lowermost of them is just above Nicolosi; and from thence to the crater, they are met with scattered about in all directions. They are generally in the form of a cone; and in the woody region, having become covered with trees, which occasionally grow almost perpendicular to their steeply-sloping sides, tend much to vary and beautify the scenery. In the barren region, however, where they, too, are barren, they add much to the dreariness of the effect, and materially heighten the volcanic impression.

On our return to Nicolosi, we discovered that a party of six Prussians—one of them a young lady—had just, before our attempt, been twice driven back from the foot of the crater to the village, but, with a much-to-be lauded perseverance, had actually girded themselves a third time for the attack, and, favoured by a few hours' cessation of wind, and the clearing away of the heavy mist, were privileged to enjoy that splendid view from the summit of the crater, which surely must constitute the main ambition of the traveller in Sicily.

A feat like this, performed in the darkness of the night, and during intense cold, while it told of no weak bodies, could hardly have been prompted by other than ardent minds. It seems, from an entry in the visitors-book, that one of the party was a professor of chemistry, and another of mineralogy—a fact which at least may go some way to explain their endurance. As for their fair comrade, our guide assured us that she encountered and went through every difficulty like a very 'diavolo'—a remark intended, no doubt, as a compliment.

Perhaps that which, even more than its stupendousness, invests Etna with interest, is the mysterious agency that has been going on within from the earliest times. In this respect it presents a singular contrast to Vesuvius, whose history presents no record of an eruption prior to the Christian era. As to Etna, more than a thousand years before that date, it is said that a whole people—the Sicani—fled terrified before its desolations; and even now, after the lapse of three thousand years, there come anew the roarings of its

thunder and the rushing of its lava. The existence of Etna is the grand proclaimer of the volcanic nature of the surrounding region; but minor evidences are not wanting. Just as Vesuvius reckons, or has reckoned, for its allies, the eruptions of Ischia, the Solfatara of Puzzuoli, and the development of the Monte Nuovo, so we find, with reference to the giant of Sicily, that the Lipari Islands are all volcanic; that sulphur is abundantly produced near Girgenti; that all kinds of hot-springs are found in various parts; that strange noises are not unfrequently heard; that many an earthquake comes to spread, always fear, and often desolation, through the land; and, finally, that one fine day, about twenty years ago, just off the coast of Sciaccia, up sprang a nice island, adorned with a volcano in the centre, which spouted forth all manner of things fiery; and just as people began to think of finding for it a name, and perhaps were planning how they might make their fortunes upon it, down it plunged to the bottom again, and has never been heard of since.

#### LETTER FROM AN AUSTRALIAN EMIGRANT.

The following copy of a letter from a steerage-passenger to Australia, describing his voyage and what he encountered on landing, has been handed to us for publication. The few particulars he gives do not differ from those in ordinary accounts. His notice of the discomforts of the voyage, affords another proof of the almost total disregard to promises on the part of shipping-agents; and the absence of any practical remedy on this point, is a real disgrace to those who are appointed to superintend the shipping of emigrants:—

MELBOURNE, PORT-PHILLIP, Sept. 18, 1852.

WE wrote to you on the 3d August last, per the *Coriolanus*, off the Cape of Good Hope, informing you that we were all in good health. We have since arrived here safely, after a most favourable passage of ninety-five days. We have had no sickness on board, excepting two cases; but we lost a young man, named George Johnson, overboard during a rather stormy night, the worst we had during the voyage. As the vessel was rolling tremendously, and sailing at the rate of twelve knots an hour, no attempt could be made to rescue him: he therefore perished.

The life on board an emigrant vessel, especially when crowded to excess as we were, is miserable in the extreme, and ought not to be undergone by any one who is well to do in England, otherwise they are certain to rue it bitterly. We had not much sea-sickness, the weather being fine; but the air between decks being impure from so many passengers on board, appeared to take away our appetites; we could never relish the ship's beef or pork during the entire voyage. We had therefore to buy from our fellow-passengers ham, cheese, flour, &c., as we could not get any of these articles from the captain, although a printed list was given to us at Liverpool, stating they were to be had on board the ship. Going a long sea-voyage is like going into an hospital; and you should take with you all the nice things you can get stowed away, to serve the whole time. Our voyage was a most wearisome and miserable affair, and we shall not readily undertake it a second time.

We landed last Saturday, but could get no house, rooms, nor lodgings; in fact, they are not at present to be obtained for love or money. Single men may obtain board and lodgings at very high rates, but married people and children cannot find any place to go to, except after a search for several days, and then they must pay 15s. to 30s. per week for one or two rooms like pitmen's cottages at home.

Mr Jacob Wood kindly came to our assistance, and

gave us lodgings at his own and a friend's house until we got a room, which was not before three days after landing—our luggage, bedding, &c., lying in an open yard. We have hired a large wood-shed, called a weather-board house, at 15s. per week, and were glad to get it; we are all stowed in it excepting Margaret, who remains with Mrs Wood for the present. I write those particulars to show you the present state of affairs at Melbourne; the fact is, people are arriving too quickly from England, and there is scarcely any buildings going forward. Mechanics and labourers can obtain immediate employment at high wages, say 10s., 25s., per day; but clerks and fine gentlemen cannot get situations. Nothing but work or trading will do here. It is impossible to describe the place until I have been longer in it: it seems a kind of cut-and-run, take-it or let-it-alone sort of place. There is no chaffering in business: all is done in the Yankee go-ahead style, every one considering himself as good as his neighbour. The strangest mortals imaginable are galloping about the streets on badly-groomed, but well-bred horses: there is no trotting on horseback. The streets being neither flagged nor paved, are in rainy weather ankle-deep in mud.

You will be thinking that I am a long time in writing something about the all-important topic of the gold-diggings. In the first place, I must tell you it is not a very easy matter to get the desired information, although I am in Melbourne. I have seen several parties who have been at the diggings who have lost money, whilst others have done well; amongst the latter number is Mr Wood, who, along with his brother, dug 45 pounds of gold out of one hole—which amounts to about L.900 each—after doing little or nothing for several weeks: it therefore appears to be quite a lottery. There is, besides, a great deal of hardship to undergo in searching for the precious metal. The nights now are as cold as winter, and the days like summer in Melbourne; it is consequently no joke sleeping under a thin tent in such weather.

From what I see at present, I do not like the colony, and will probably return to Old England after a time.

We intend starting on Monday first to try our luck at the diggings, you must therefore not expect to hear from us for some months after, as it is like commencing a campaign—you have no time to write letters, for by all accounts it is no child's play. There is no means of getting there at present except by walking: horses are scarce, and selling at L.80, L.90, and L.100 each. Robberies are frequent on the road and at the diggings: all parties are going armed, and exorbitant prices are being paid for pistols, guns being too heavy to carry.

Publicans are reaping immense harvests, as the successful diggers spend their money as freely as they get it. The sum of L.10,000 has been offered for the good-will of one house.

The dearest thing after house-rent is wood for fuel, which sells at L.2 per hundredweight, and water is 7s. per hogshead.—Yours, &c., C. H.

While on the subject of Australia, we may take the opportunity of giving publicity to the following passage from a letter of Mr William Howitt to a friend in this country. He writes from Melbourne:—'PORT-PHILLIP, September 26, 1852.—Be so good as to place the fact which I now state in a prominent part of your paper, that it may be copied as widely as possible. Up to the time of my quitting England for this place, on the 10th of June last, I never saw it published anywhere, either in the newspaper correspondence from the Australian gold-fields, or in any of the books or pamphlets on these gold-fields, that Bank-of-England notes are held to be no legal tender in these colonies. Such, however, is the case. They are utterly refused here, even by the bankers, except at a discount of 20 per cent. Numbers of persons are coming out daily. There are a thousand arriving at this port per diem, and not ten men out of each thousand are aware of this fact. In the ship in which I came—the *Kent*—there were numbers struck with consternation at the news. Some lost from L.40 to L.100 by their Bank-of-England notes; almost every one something, more or less.'

## A SKETCH.

'Emelle, that fayrer was to seene  
Than is the lilye on hys stalke grene.'  
'Uprose the sunne, and uprose Emelle.'

CHAUCER.

Dost thou thus love me, O thou beautiful?  
So beautiful, that beside thee I seem  
Like a great dusky cloud beside a star;  
Yet thou creep'st near its edges, and it rests  
On its dun path, the slow, deep-hearted cloud—  
Then opens a rift and lets thee enter in,  
And with thy beauty quivering in its breast,  
Feels no more its own blackness—*thou art fair.*

Dost thou so love me, O thou all-beloved,  
In whose large store the very meaneest coin  
Would outbuy my whole wealth?—yet here thou com'st  
Like a kind heiress from her purple and down  
Uprising, who for pity cannot sleep,  
But goes forth to the stranger at her gate—  
The beggar stranger at her beauteous gate—  
And clothes, and feeds; scarce blest, till she has blest.

Dost thou thus love me, O thou pure of heart,  
Whose very looks are prayers? What couldst thou see  
In this lone troubled pool by the yew-wood's side,  
That thou sat'st by its marge and idled thy hand,  
Saying: 'It is so clear.' And lo, ere long  
The black pool caught the shimmer of thy wings,  
Its slimes slid downward from thy stainless hand,  
Its depths grew calm that there thy form might rise.

O beautiful!—O well-beloved!—O rich  
In all that makes my need!—I lay me down  
In the shadow of thy love and feel no pain.  
The cloud floats on, thou shining in its heart,  
The beggar wears thy purple as his own,  
The noisome waves, made pure, creep to thy feet,  
Rejoicing that they yet can image thee,  
And beyond thee, God's heaven, thick sown with stars.

## HOW TO TOAST BREAD.

Chestnut brown will be far too deep a colour for good toast; the nearer you can keep it to a straw-colour, the more delicious to the taste, and the more wholesome it will be. If you would have a slice of bread so toasted as to be pleasant to the palate and wholesome to the stomach, never let one particle of the surface be charred. To effect this is very obvious. It consists in keeping the bread at the proper distance from the fire, and exposing it to a proper heat for a due length of time. By this means the whole of the water may be evaporated out of it, and it may be changed from dough—which has always a tendency to undergo acetous fermentation, whether in the stomach or out of it—to the pure farina wheat, which is in itself one of the most wholesome species of food, not only for the strong and healthy, but for the delicate and diseased. As it is turned to farina, it is disintegrated, the tough and gluey nature is gone, every part can be penetrated, it is equally warm all over, and not so hot as to turn the butter into oil, which, even in the case of the best butter, is invariably turning a wholesome substance into a poison. The properly-toasted slice of bread absorbs the butter, but does not convert it into oil; and both butter and farina are in a state of very minute division, the one serving to expose the other to the free action of the gastric fluid in the stomach; so that when a slice of toast is rightly prepared, there is not a lighter article in the whole vocabulary of cookery.—*Household Almanac for 1853.*

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